

COFFEE COUNTY

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Council Priorities

1. Increase parenting skills. Many parents lack the skills necessary to help their children become mature and responsible adults.

Coffee County needs to develop community programs to address parenting issues at all levels. This may include home education, intensive case management, and parenting classes for families who have the greatest risk factors. Parents and community partners also need to be provided with simple links to community resources. The Children's Policy Council intends to partner with existing services and identify gaps in services so that a "safety net" of parenting resources is readily available to every parent in the county.

2. Insure quality schools. School dropout, school failure, and school truancy set children up for long-term failure.

Schools should identify at an early stage those students who are at the greatest risk for school failure. The Children's Policy Council intends to foster collaboration among agencies, schools, and families to promote school readiness, parental involvement, and student wellness and safety.

3. Implement solutions to the problem of school truancy.

The Children's Policy Council will continue a county-wide truancy plan based upon Alabama Department of Education guidelines. The Council will collaborate with schools, service agencies, court officials, and parents to foster school attendance.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Lack of training and awareness concerning developmental issues and special-needs children

Action Steps

- 1) Distribute educational brochures to community agencies, public buildings, health care offices, family service center, etc.
- 2) Provide speakers and workshops on these issues.
- 3) Develop and distribute community training calendar.

Child abuse and neglect, including abduction and drug/alcohol abuse in expectant mothers

Action Steps

- 1) Distribute educational brochures to community agencies, public buildings, health care offices, family service center, etc.
- 2) Provide speakers and workshops on these issues.
- 3) Develop and distribute community training calendar.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Lack of transportation

Action Steps

- 1) Request Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Corporation to do a needs assessment for public transportation system.
- 2) Review needs assessment as it pertains to Coffee County and makes recommendations.
- 3) Partner with Department of Transportation if need is identified.

Need to develop positive work ethic at early age

Action Steps

- 1) Implement "Reality Check" program for schools in Coffee County in cooperation with Alabama Extension Service.
- 2) Recruit and train volunteers to present "Choices" program to schools and community organizations.
- 3) Identify additional resources to develop and reinforce positive work ethic.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

School truancy

Action Steps

- 1) Maintain and refine Early Warning Program.
- 2) Revise/update guidelines of county-wide truancy plan.
- 3) Promote county-wide efforts to educate parents and children about importance of school attendance.

Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) pass rate

Action Steps

- 1) Maintain and improve alternative education and remediation efforts to increase graduation rate.
- 2) Seek funding to employ social workers/parent involvement specialists to work with families of at-risk students.
- 3) Implement Reality Check (or similar program) for real world connection.

Cyber safety

Action Steps

- 1) Maintain Cyber Bullying Program with emphasis in schools for parents, students, and teachers.
- 2) Contact PTO's to include in programs.
- 3) Contact other agencies (churches, recreation departments, etc.) to include in programs.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Lack of coordination between agencies concerning provision of mental health services to families

Action Steps

- 1) Collaborate with mental health providers to establish a unified protocol for referrals.
- 2) Invite mental health providers to present referral process to Children's Policy Council.

Teen pregnancy and lack of prenatal care

Action Steps

- 1) Continue to educate community about the availability of programs for teen parents and for abstinence education.
- 2) Continue home visitation programs for pregnant teens and teen parents.
- 3) Continue abstinence education programs for elementary through junior high school students.

Childhood obesity

Action Steps

- 1) Continue nutrition education programs taught within parenting classes.
- 2) Support schools in implementing wellness programs.
- 3) Support and publicize existing fitness education and programs through the schools, YMCA, recreation departments and community health and fitness fairs.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Lack of parental skills

Action Steps

- 1) Develop list of risk factors common to children in homes lacking parenting skills and train school personnel in screening and referral.
- 2) Develop community programs to address parenting issues.
- 3) Develop home education programs and intensive case management for families who have the greatest risk.

Lack of parent/school collaboration

Action Steps

- 1) Create non-threatening "Parent Connection" workshops to increase parental comfort in school environment and parental responsibility for school success.
- 2) Provide parents with links to essential community resources and train school personnel in referral.
- 3) Implement a school volunteer program to better support school and community resources.
- 4) Implement community-based prevention strategies to address poor school attendance.

Lack of support and education for non-traditional families

Action Steps

- 1) Continue advocacy and legal assistance for custody issues.
- 2) Continue and expand home visitation, parenting classes, and case management for pregnant and parenting teens.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Fear of bullying and harassment among children

Action Steps

- 1) Conduct parent education forum on recognizing and addressing bullying and harassment - both traditional and electronic.
- 2) Educate students about bullying.
- 3) Educate school personnel and others who work with children about signs of bullying and how to combat it.

Family violence

Action Steps

- 1) Support local law enforcement agencies in designing and implementing domestic violence protocol, in educating law enforcement and legal community about the protocol, and in implementing domestic violence docket in municipal and district courts.
- 2) Provide education and publicity to help children and adults overcome fear of law enforcement members.
- 3) Insure domestic violence education and treatment are available for victims and perpetrators.

Lack of family character development and positive role models

Action Steps

- 1) Implement family character education and parenting skills program through community agencies, schools, and churches.
- 2) Implement mentoring programs for at-risk youth, including possibility of Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs.
- 3) Design family activities in local churches and community organizations to promote interaction with positive role models.

Policy Recommendations

- Adopt internet safety courses for high school students.
- Support implementation of "Camellia Project" statewide.
- Fund social workers in schools to work with parental involvement.
- Fund family service centers.
- Continue funding for Youth Enrichment Services Program, a WIA initiative.